Section 1

How to Find and Hire Your Home Care Worker



Using Your Service Plan as a Tool

When you are preparing to hire a home care worker, your Service Plan can be a helpful tool in determining job duties.

After you and your case manager have completed a Service Plan, you will also need to discuss how tasks will be done, and how often. Specifically your Service Plan includes:

- A list of services the home care worker will do.
- A description of what, when and how often the services are to be done.
- The name of an emergency contact person.

By talking over your Service Plan as soon as you hire someone, you and your home care worker will:

- Know what is expected.
- Understand the limits of the work.
- Avoid misunderstandings.
- Feel like part of the same team.

Remember, only the case manager can change your Service Plan. If you and your home care worker are in disagreement about the Service Plan, you might consider contacting the case manager for clarification.

Balance expectations by establishing a routine.

- You and your home care worker should agree to a routine and stick to it.
- A routine (or schedule) helps your home care worker to complete all tasks.
- A routine (or schedule) helps you to know if all tasks were completed.
- Both of you will know what to expect each day.
- As a part of your routine, set aside a time each week to discuss how things are going.

RESOURCE SECTION

Service Plan Template

What Tasks are Authorized on Your Service Plan?

Your service plan will give you a very clear understanding of the kinds of duties your home care worker will do for you. Duties could include activities of daily living such as bathing, grooming, dressing and more. Depending on the care you need, you may choose to hire more than one worker. If you have several workers, you may want each of them to do a little of every task, or you may want to divide up responsibilities among workers.

One of the most important things you, as an employer, must know is that you should not ask or expect your home care worker(s) to do things that are not listed in your service plan.

What Kind of Person Do You Need?

Spend a few moments thinking about what you might expect from someone working for you. Below is a short list of qualities you might want to consider when hiring home care workers:

- Punctual being on time
- **Dependable** being on time consistently; being available when needed
- **Helpful** willing to do things you request
- Goal oriented wanting to get things done
- **Honest** someone you can trust
- Clean and neat keeps things picked up and sanitary
- **Takes direction** not argumentative; open to your way of doing things
- **Communicative** easy to talk with
- **Flexible** can respond to realistic circumstances and changes
- Patient doesn't get bothered if things take longer than expected

While different qualities are important to different people, it is important that you decide which ones are most important to *you*. It may be difficult to find a person who possesses all of these qualities, so you may want to consider prioritizing the qualities you most desire from your worker.

It is your responsibility to clearly express your needs and preferences. Your home care worker works for you. Your worker should provide services in a way that respects your preferences.

You also have the right to not hire a home care worker if you are uncomfortable with him/her regardless of the reason. The person you hire will be doing very personal tasks for you in the most private aspects of your life. It is extremely important that you are comfortable with the person you hire.

Now that you have a good idea of the kind of person you are looking for, you are ready to write a job description that describes what kind of work you'd like that person to do.

Job Descriptions

When home care workers are asked what they dislike about in-home services, lack of a specific job description is among the most common of complaints.

Similar complaints might be:

- Not having a clear understanding of the duties involved before they are hired;
- The consumer's tendency to minimize the time and effort involved in the tasks before the worker is hired; and
- Adding on duties the home care worker did not feel they had agreed to do.

Without knowing your expectations, it is hard for a home care worker to know if they are doing the job they were hired to do.

How to Hire and Supervise Your Home Care Worker

A good job description should follow your service plan and serves several purposes:

- It helps people you are hiring determine if they can do the job.
 Most people have never considered the wide variety of tasks
 that are involved in daily living.
- It gives you an accurate assessment of the amount and kind of help you need. It is easy to overlook many of the minor jobs and details that are a part of your home care worker's duties, and you may be surprised by the amount of work involved.
- 3. When interviewing, a job description will give your potential home care worker a clear picture of the duties involved in the job.
- 4. It helps you avoid the natural tendency to understate and minimize the time and effort involved in the job in order to make it seem more attractive. You DO have to hire someone and it is hard to avoid feeling pressured about all the tasks you expect completed.
- 5. When it is time to review performance or renegotiate the agreement, the job description helps you do a thorough job. Any changes you agree to make should be noted immediately.

Budgeting Time

Without even trying, considerable time can be spent with tasks that at first glance, don't seem to amount to much. If you haven't budgeted for this time correctly, you may be disappointed in your home care worker and their ability to complete all the work you assign, or worse, your needs may not be adequately met.

RESOURCE SECTION

Sample Job Description – Task List

What Kinds of Qualities Are Necessary?

As you begin the process of hiring a home care worker, think about what it is you are looking for in your worker. Experience, training and good references are obvious. Personality, dependability, attitude and stability are equally important. Think about people who have helped you in the past and what you liked or disliked about them.

Past Experiences Think about one or two of your past home care workers and answer the following questions. 1. What did you like about their performance? 2. What did you like about their personality? 3. What would have made you more satisfied? 4. What did you dislike about them or their performance?

Finding Potential Home Care Workers

There are a number of ways to find a home care worker. Probably the most effective way is to use the Home Care Referral Registry. The Referral Registry is a database of pre-screened and available

home care workers in Washington

State.

Registry staff will collect details from you and your case manager about your service needs and schedule preferences. Once information is collected, a list of the most suitable workers from your local area is created and provided to you.



Contact the Home Care Referral Registry to find workers available in your area.

Call 1-800-970-5456

RESOURCE SECTION

Referral Registry - Frequently Asked Questions

Pre-Screening Applicants

The purpose of prescreening applicants is to avoid wasting time interviewing people who obviously will not qualify for the job. If you elect to use the Home Care Referral Registry to find workers, their staff will help with some of the pre-screening process including, running background checks, confirming worker availability and their ability to do certain tasks.

Once you have some names to call, consider the steps below to help you prescreen applicants:

- 1. Call the person and introduce yourself, explain that you are looking for a home care worker.
- 2. If you have to leave a message, explain why you are calling, leave your name and your phone number.
- 3. Give a brief description of the hours and duties.
- 4. If they are available to work during the hours you need, fill in the remaining information on a Telephone Screening Form.
- 5. Set up a specific time for an interview.
- 6. Remind the applicant to bring contact information for at least three personal or professional references.
- 7. Keep in mind that you do not owe anyone an interview. If you are not comfortable about the applicant coming to your home—for any reason whatsoever—do not allow it to happen. You can always inform the applicant that you are not interested.
- 8. Protect yourself. Meet in a public place if at all possible. If it is difficult for you to leave your home, arrange for another person to be with you while conducting an interview.

RESOURCE SECTION

Sample Telephone Screening Form

Interviewing Applicants



Your approach to the interview is important. You are offering a job to someone who is looking for work.

The person you interview may be nervous. Put them at ease, call them by their first name, maintain eye contact and tell them a little about yourself.

Next, have the applicant complete the **job application** and **reference check release form,** (samples are included in the Resource Section). While you review their completed application, it would be an ideal time for them to

review the job description you've prepared. Pay special attention to the following areas on their application and feel free to ask questions about:

- Length of time at previous jobs
- Gaps in employment
- Reasons for leaving each job
- Attitude about previous jobs (what did they like/dislike?)
- Phone number for each consumer

After you are satisfied with the application, go through the job description with the applicant, making sure they understand what the job involves.

Tip: Interviewing an Applicant

- Have a friend or family member with you during the interview.
- Have a copy of your service plan available.
- Write down your questions.



Sample Employment Application

What to Look for During an Interview:

- Appearance: Is the applicant dressed appropriately? Are they neat, well-groomed and wearing clean clothes?
- Punctuality: If the applicant is late, you deserve a good explanation, preferably one you can check.
- Evasiveness: If the applicant seems reluctant to discuss a
 previous consumer or there are gaps in the employment history
 that are not explained to your satisfaction, insist on getting
 information you can verify. Gaps in work history might indicate
 negative information, such as dismissal for cause, alcoholism or
 jail time.
- Attitude: Does the applicant seem interested? Do they ask
 questions and make comments about the job? Do they seem
 open and flexible? Does the job fit with what they state are their
 goals and lifestyle?

Questions to Ask in an Interview:

It is important to have a written list of questions so that all applicants are asked the same questions and you don't miss anything important. What you ask will depend on your own needs and desires.

To start making your own list, it may be helpful to again think about people who have helped you in the past:

- What did you like about their performance?
- What did you like about their personality?
- What did you not like?
- What would have made you more satisfied?

Interview Questions

Avoid any questions about age, disability, marital status, religion, race, creed or ethnicity. It is okay if the applicant freely shares this information in their answers, but do not let this affect your hiring decision.

Suggested Questions to Ask:

You are interviewing a worker that will be spending time in your home. You may need to get more personal information about habits, preferences, likes and dislikes so that you can determine if you and the applicant will be a good fit. The following are some areas you might consider asking about:

Food and Eating Arrangements

- Do you have experience cooking?
- How do you feel about taking cooking instructions from me?
- Are you willing to accommodate special diets?

Transportation

- Can you drive?
- Do you have a valid driver's license? (Ask to see it.)
- Do you have valid insurance? (Ask to see proof of insurance.)
- How do you feel about accompanying me on errands?

Housekeeping

- Have you had experience with housekeeping and laundry?
- Do you like things very neat, or are you not particular?
- How do you feel about taking cleaning instructions from me?
- Do you like a definite schedule for cleaning and laundry (example: vacuum on Monday, scrub floors on Tuesday), or do you prefer to be more flexible?

Personal Care

- Do you think it would bother you to help me with toileting, catheter irrigations or suppositories? (if necessary)
- Will you be able to bathe me? (if necessary)
- Is there any part of my care that makes you uncomfortable?

Once you have completed the interviews and you are prioritizing all of your applicants, it may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- Will this applicant be able to meet my daily living needs?
- Can I live with this person? (if applicable)
- Can I depend on this person?
- Can I trust this person?
- Can I see any conflicting areas with this person?

RESOURCE SECTION

Sample Interview Questions

Words of Advice from a Fellow Consumer

Obviously your employee needs to be reliable, on time, honest, and willing to do what you need. Since they perform personal tasks for you in your private space and you will spend many hours with him/her, you need someone with a flexible attitude who views you as the supervisor. Few people with disabilities have workers with whom they do not form some type of relationship other than consumer/employee. It is natural to share your life with the person who is assisting you to some degree. Therefore, his/her attitude toward you, your family and the assigned tasks is extremely important.

You need people who will respect and honor your preferences. You need people who clearly understand that you make the decisions about what is done for you and how. Some employees may think that you are not capable of making your own decisions and that he/she should intervene to decide things for you. You do not need the stress of dealing with such attitudes day in and day out. Therefore, when hiring someone, his/her attitude is a crucial qualification.

Conducting Reference Checks

You can either call or write to the applicant's personal and professional references.

Whichever method you choose, let the reference know you have the applicant's permission to contact him/her.

You should explain the nature of the job to the reference so he/she can evaluate the applicant with the job in mind.

Always check all references. As a rule, anything that can be checked, should be checked.

Letters of recommendation that the applicant provides to you can be substituted for a reference check, or they can be used as additional information about the applicant.

Know what questions you want to ask references before you call. Be prepared.

Information provided by a reference should always be kept confidential.

When checking references:

- Give the reference a brief description of the position.
- Ask how long the person was employed, or how long the reference has known them.
- Check absenteeism and dependability.
- Find out if the person handled money, does the reference consider them honest?
- Ensure the person can work independently.
- Determine if the person can take supervision and criticism.
- Ask how the rapport was between the person and their co-workers and/or supervisor.
- Determine why employment ended.
- Ask if the reference would re-hire the person.

RESOURCE SECTION

Release for Reference Checks

Checking Employment History

Many previous consumer/employers are reluctant to do more than confirm that a person was an employee because of the possibility of a lawsuit. When possible, talk to the former supervisor and assure them you have a signed release.

It is acceptable to fax or send a copy of the signed release to the former consumer prior to discussing employment history.

If the consumer/employer is reluctant to give anything but the most basic details, the following questions can help you verify employment history:

- How long did he/she work for you?
- Why did he/she leave?

$\begin{tabular}{ll} Employee \\ Recommendations: \\ \end{tabular}$

A bad recommendation does not always mean you should not hire the person. You can ask the applicant for a good explanation and base your decision on all the information you receive.

- Was he/she recommended for raises or promotions? (If applicable)
- How was his/her attendance, punctuality and attitude?
- Would you hire him/her again? This is the key question and should always be asked. Most consumer/employers will answer this one honestly, even if they won't answer anything else.

RESOURCE SECTION

Sample Reference Checklist

Making Your Choice

Once you have gone through the prescreening, interview and reference check process, you might want to give yourself some time to think before you decide to hire your candidate (it also gives them a chance to think about the job—better to know now than back out later). Set a time when you'll call and let them know your decision.



Once you have interviewed applicants and have decided which person you will hire, it is important that you give the name of the person you choose to your case manager.

If any significant revisions or changes come up later, you will need to revise the employment agreement.

Case Manager Authorization

Your home care worker cannot be paid until services are authorized by your case manager.

Contact your case manager to initiate this process.

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